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RUEHBUL/AMEMBASSY KABUL PRIORITY 0187
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C O N F I D E N T I A L THE HAGUE 001739

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/09/2016
TAGS: [MARR](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [NL](#) [LE](#) [AF](#)
SUBJECT: NETHERLANDS/JSF/C-17/LEBANON/AFGHANISTAN: MEETING
WITH DEFENSE MINISTER KAMP

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REF: KABUL 3440

Classified By: Ambassador Roland Arnall, reasons 1.4 (b,d)
¶1. (C) Summary: Defense Minister Henk Kamp said the GONL is committed to the Joint Strike Fighter (JSF) program, and hopes to sign the follow-on MOU prior to the parliamentary elections on November 22. He said the GONL remains interested in the NATO C-17 consortium, and is actively reviewing funding options. Kamp reiterated that Dutch forces were currently spread too thin to make a significant operational contribution to an International Force (IF) in Lebanon, but did not rule out the possibility of a naval contribution at some point provided there was a ""serious"" need. The GONL continues to appreciate USG support to the Dutch ISAF III deployment in Afghanistan. With the exception of a few difficulties -- now resolved -- Kamp claimed that the Dutch deployment is ""on track."" He discussed these issues with Ambassador Arnall on August 9. End summary.

JSF: Committed

¶2. (C) Kamp said that the GONL remains seriously committed to JSF -- not only is the program the best available, but it is

also important for the U.S-Dutch relationship. He said the GONL intends to sign the follow-on MOU, and would make a decision regarding the timing of the signature in the near future. He hoped to sign the follow-on MOU prior to the parliamentary elections on November 22. However, Kamp was not concerned if signature slipped until after the elections. He explained that the main opposition Labor Party (PvdA) was in government during the program's initiation, and had supported JSF. If Labor was a part of the next government coalition -- as current polls suggest -- Kamp believed chances were good they would support continuing the program, despite current political posturing to the contrary.

13. (C) In a separate conversation, MOD State Secretary Cees van der Knaap told Ambassador Arnall August 9 that the GONL still intends to sign the follow-on MOU prior to the parliamentary elections. Amb. Arnall informed van der Knaap of our intentions to meet with Dutch Parliamentary Defense Committee members prior to their trip to Washington and Ft. Worth to discuss JSF. Van der Knaap welcomed such discussion, but requested that the USG think and act "carefully" given the political sensitivities.

C-17 Consortium: Continued Interest

14. (C) Kamp confirmed that the Dutch remain very interested in participating in the NATO C-17 consortium. He explained that the financial aspects of Dutch participation have not yet been resolved, as the GONL is trying to determine whether the program should be funded by the MFA -- as a strategic airlift initiative -- or MOD -- as a defense acquisition. He added that the MFA and MOD are actively discussing the matter with the intention of requesting additional funding from Dutch Finance Minister Zalm in the coming weeks in order to participate in the consortium.

Lebanon: Dutch Stretched Thin; "Serious" Naval Ops Possible

15. (C) Amb. Arnall noted the GONL's position -- stated publicly by Kamp and Foreign Minister Bot -- that the Dutch were "stretched too thin" to be able to contribute to the International Force (IF) in Lebanon. Kamp confirmed that was the case, noting that the GONL would like to get involved and that he personally was a strong advocate of Israel. However, he explained that the Dutch want to "do current missions one hundred percent" -- contributing to the IF would detract from this goal.

16. (C) Amb. Arnall asked if the Dutch in the future might consider a naval contribution to the IF. Kamp replied that the Dutch might be interested, as the Dutch navy is "very capable." But the mission would need to be a "serious task" to warrant consideration, he added. He mentioned Dutch support to UNMIL off the coast of Liberia in late 2003, in which Dutch personnel were not seriously engaged for three months -- this was "not good for Dutch personnel," Kamp said.

Afghanistan: On Track

17. (C) Amb. Arnall expressed his condolences to Kamp for the recent loss of two Dutch soldiers in a helicopter crash in eastern Afghanistan, and noted continued USG appreciation for the Dutch commitment to the ISAF III mission in Uruzgan. He commended Kamp on the Dutch MOD's public relations campaign to promote the mission and build public support.

18. (C) Kamp thanked the USG for its support in Uruzgan, especially regarding the use of U.S. medevac and Apache helicopters, and C-17 airlift support. He praised previous and continued efforts in Uruzgan, and noted that he was making efforts to explain to the Dutch public that the USG "did a lot of good" in Uruzgan -- the GONL hopes to build upon the solid foundation initiated by the USG. He also appreciated the continued U.S. presence in the PRT in Tarin Kowt, which is helping bolster coordination among NATO

allies. That said, Kamp noted there were a few
""difficulties"" (reftel) in the transition from the US- to
Dutch-led PRT in Tarin Kowt, especially regarding
communication on what the USG intended to take and leave
behind in the PRT. Kamp said these ""difficulties"" were now
resolved.

ARNALL